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Efforts to humanize the educational system at Kendall College are described. It is first assumed that the competetive nature of the American educational system must produce some failures, and that these failures adversely affect the self-concept of some persons, and in turn limit those persons' adult creativity. Human Potential Seminars were initiated in 1967, composed of 10 to 15 persons, with goals of: (1) self-affirmation, (2) self-determination, (3) self-motivation, and (4) creation of emphathetic persons. Persons who have attained the above goals are said to have a positive self-concept; the attainment of the latter is assumed as a legitimate educational goal. Phases in the Seminar include unfolding experiences and learning to listen to others, acknowledging achievements and satisfaction experiences, immediate goal-setting, strength acknowledging, identifying personal values, discovering areas of potential, and establishing long-range goals. Results of a questionnaire indicate that the Seminar experience continues to be an effective force for those who were involved after a year's interval. New efforts are being made to spread positive, humanizing methods throughout the college. (AE)

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THE RELEASE OF HUMAN POTENTIAL THROUGH HUMAN ENCOUNTER*

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Philosophical Assumptions There are seven philosophical assumptions on which my comments are based.

1. The prevailing American educational system emphasizes competition with the accompaning failures necessary when some persons are termed "successful."

2. The prevailing educational system often emphasizes evaluation and a reinforcement of what a person is not able to do.

3. A person's self-concept or self-esteem is influenced considerably by his school experiences of success or failure.

4. The present educational system often produces persons with damaged images of themselves.

5. A damaged self-concept results in the freezing of a person's potential to be a creative and adult human being.

6. A person characterized by self-affirmation, self-determination, self-motivation and empathetic concern for others possesses a positive self-concept.

7. The producing of persons with a positive self-concept is a legitimate educational goal.

*The Human Potential Seminars were developed at Kendall College in cooperation with Achievement Motivation Systems and the W. Clement and Jesse V. Stone Foundation.

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Many young men and women arrive on the college campus as damaged persons. As one faculty person put it "they are boiled potatoes". They have become damaged in part as a result of their long-term exposure to the American educational system with its emphasis on evaluation, competition and reinforcing of what a student is not able to do. We have been successful to a large degree in freezing the student's potential to be a human being. In our most serious successes we have accomplished the feat of dehumanizing persons whom we were to assist in their preparation for the living of an adult and creative life.

We have made it possible for students to pick themselves apart and to tell us what it is about themselves they do not like, what it is about themselves they cannot do well and what it is in the world over which they have little or no control. In essence, we have created a climate of negativism. But we have made few efforts to release the innate potential and humanness that is a part of the life of each normal healthy human being. As a result, persons feel embarrassment if not fear and guilt in talking about themselves positively.

Dr. Herbert Otto has suggested that most persons use only 10% of their potential as human beings. Dr. Otto is not speaking primarily or even necessarily to the academic potential of a person but to the entire human potential that belongs to each of us: the potential to be creative, to feel, to think, to enter into meaningful personal relationships, to be athletic, to have fun, to receive, to develop one's self as a rather complete human being.

In the past few years, several persons at Kendall College began to take seriously the possibility that students might have a

Varied potential and a humanness that had not yet been unlocked. We were dissatisfied with the results of talking to a few students on a one to one basis to deal with personal problems or to discuss the possibility that they might have some potential in an academic area. We began to take seriously the fact that it is a legitimate educational goal to assist a person in the developing of a positive self-concept. We were involved in the constructing both of an educational philosophy and small group methods which would foster a positive attitude toward self. Early group methods emphasized the overcoming of personal hang-ups and weaknesses to arrive at a better feeling about oneself. Unfortunately some persons ended this experience with a poorer self-concept than when they had entered. The climate surrounding them had not changed.

In 1967 we began to create a group experience based on the assumption that something was right <u>with</u> participants. We believed that we could help persons identify potential they once had used and again activate it in a manner that would build a positive regard for self. We began the Human Potential Seminar groups in an attempt to change the emotional climate surrounding students. On the basis of that experience we have continued to offer these seminars and to extend them throughout the college as widely as possible, to include faculty, staff and administrative persons. It seemed quite clear to us that if we intend to change the climate surrounding students, the philosophy underlying the human potential seminars must be introduced throughout the institution so as to begin to permeate it. Hence, the President of the college, the Vice-President for development, the Dean of Students, the Dean of the College, and other key administrative persons, as

well as several faculty members, participated in the process of the Human Potential Seminars. The response to this philosophy has been generally favorable.

The purpose of the Human Potential philosophy is to help each person discover what it is about himself that he can like and build upon it - in short, to increase his humanness by changing his way of feeling and thinking about himself. More specifically our goals are those of 1. self-affirmation, 2. self-determination, 3. self-motivation, 4. creating of empathetic persons. Let me return to each of these briefly. Self-affirmation involves being able to know "who" one is and to affirm that "who". Self-determination means that persons learn that they can make decisions and they learn how to make decisions and resolve conflicts for themselves. In terms of self-motivation persons learn to motivate themselves toward achievement, rather than to rely upon persons or institutions outside of them to provide pressures and deadlines. An empathetic person is able to give and to receive direct honest sensitive communications and to care deeply about other persons.

Application of the Human Potential philosophy may take several forms. Two small group experiences have been effective at Kendall College. I will speak in terms of these groups and the follow-up results on the seminars. Then I want to discuss Phase 2 in our effort to humanize the institution. Let us look at the process of the Human Potential Seminars. While I shall present the process as phases, there is a flexibility and an element of human encounter which permeates the entire experience. As with any group experience, structure or the absence of such will be related to the comfort of the group's leader. By definition,

a human potential process is open and dynamic rather than determined. Phases can be seen as emphases to reinforce any or all of the four behavioral goals which are involved in the building of an actively positive self-concept. The importance should be given to what the emphases represent not to the particular point in time when something is done in the group.

The principles of the Human Potential Seminars are shared with students experientially not didactically. The group of 10 to 15 persons begins with a personal unfoldment experience. Each person is encouraged by the leader's unfoldment to share those experiences and feelings which he feels have contributed to his being the person that he now is. It has been a very freeing and exciting experience to find that others are listening and to learn that others have had experiences and feelings similar to ours. In this opening phase, one begins to know "who" he is and to become able to affirm that "who". The experiences of the student is the subject matter. This process is not an attempt at disguised group therapy, for group therapy focuses on pathology, on the unconscious reasons for it and on the meaning of group inter-actions. In the Human Potential groups we hear about any events in a person's life which have contributed to his being the person that he presently is; that includes joyous, happy experiences.

As a part of the unfoldment experience, the group engages in an empathetic recall of verbal and non-verbal communications made by group members. Here a person experiences that he is of worth to the persons in the group in that he has been listened to. Someone has heard his communications. At the same time, other persons in the group learn that they have the potential to listen and to be

with other people - to be empathetic. Experience in these groups has nearly always shown that persons want to be listened to and that people can in fact listen to other people.

In the second phase, a person is encouraged to acknowledge his achievement and satisfaction experiences. This can be a very self-affirming experience. The group encounters a person by clarifying why the experiences have been possible, how "achievement" or "satisfaction" is defined by that person, how the expression of potential is hindered or used. External validation is an explanatory pattern which is often seen. In this pattern, a person feels successful or identifies his achievements only when they have first been so labeled by someone outside of him. He is a person who has been elected President of his club, has made a letter in track or football, or has made the Dean's list or gotten a raise in salary. Some external factor or person has said to him "you are successful." There is little feeling of personal success or worthiness apart from what others think. Through human encounter the group often challenges a person's definition of success, his prior use of his potential and his tendency to play down the potential which he has. In short, a negative self-concept may be challenged for the first time. Most persons are much more adept at being self-critical then at identifying the strengths and resources on which to build a more creative and satisfying life.

The third phase of the seminars is structured to help persons engage in immediate self-motivation. Each time the group meets, all persons are involved in the setting of goals which are to be achieved by the time of the next meeting. The seminars are based not primarily on an analytic approach but rather on human encounter and personal

action. We want persons to become involved in encountering themselves, and in doing those things for themselves which will directly put meaning and value into their life as immediately as possible. Thus, goals are pulled out of the future where they often have little motivational usefulness and put into the present in order to give each person control over what he does to and in his life. A goal is to meet the following criteria or guidelines:

1. It is to be conceivable - it must be able to be put into words.
2. It must be believable to that person.
3. It must be achievable, and achievable in the given time span.
4. It must be measurable in specific ways rather than general or abstract.
5. It must be something the person <u>wants</u> to do rather than something he has to do or should do.
6. It must be presented without an alternative.
7. It must be neither self nor other injurious.

Goal setting is important because it says to the person that he is responsible for running his life. It puts motivation upon his shoulders.

A fourth phase of the process is strength acknowledgment. Here a person cites all his personal strengths and invites the group members to share strengths they see in him. Attention is also given by the group to what keeps the person from using his strengths. Finally a group fantasy is constructed in which it is imagined what this person can be, and be doing five years from now if he is using his strengths. Most often group members encounter a person with many more strengths than the person has been able to acknowledge in himself. Through encountering a person both in terms of the strengths

that are seen which a person has been unable to acknowledge and in terms of directly indicating what keeps a person from using his strengths, the effect is one of self-affirmation and encouraging the further identification of human potential.

A fifth phase focuses on the identification of personal values and the relationship of personal values to personal conflict. Here an attempt is made to help a person engage in responsible self-determination and conflict resolution. He determines what values are operative in his life and which of his values are to influence his decisions in personal or social matters. Through various means, a person identifies his top 5 or 6 values and ranks them in the order of their importance. Goal setting is then directly related to one's value system. This helps a person begin to engage in behaviors and activities that put meaning directly into his life. As values are tested, a reshuffling of a value system often occurs as a person begins to distinguish "should" values which belong to others from "real" values which are uniquely his own. Many personal conflicts exist because a person maintains two or more values at a level of equal importance. In conflict resolution, the nature of the conflict is first identified. Then the conflict in values must be clarified. A value conflict can exist within one's own value system, or between one's values and those of another person or institution. The person rank orders his values in terms of which one of the two he will reinforce and with the use of top strengths, designs a plan of action to move himself out of the conflict. Again, the <u>action</u> is reinforcing of responsible self-determination. When a person is in conflict our assumption is

that he is unable to use his potential fully.

A sixth emphasis is that of potential bombardment. The focus is on areas of latent potential which the person may have. Goal setting is used as a way of tapping into those capacities or talents. Adult persons have become involved in doing things, particularly in the creative and artistic areas that they have wanted to do for years but lacked the confidence to attempt.

The final emphasis of the process is long range goal establishment in relation to one's values and strengths and the drawing of implications of the total human potential experience for each person's style of living.

A year after the first group of 60 students experienced the human potential seminars, a questionnaire was sent to which 57 students responded. The results may be of interest here; 82% of the respondents indicated that they were still setting and meeting their goals, 84% indicated that they were still sharing their goals with others, 89% indicated that they have consciously thought of their values in the last three months, 77% answered that they presently think more highly of themselves than they did prior to the experience, 77% indicate that they now find more situations and experiences in which they recognize personal success, 66% indicate that they have had more courage to try new things, 94% indicate that they are presently aware of and are able to solve personal conflicts, 94% answered that they would recommend the human potential experience to other persons. The results demonstrated that in the minds of the participating students the Human Potential experience continued to be a helpful process a year after the groups ended. A questionnaire given to 199 students who participated in Human Potential groups at Moraine Valley Community College in Oak Lawn, Illinois, during the

fall of 1968, essentially replicated the Kendall results.

Several group modes of implementing the human potential philosophy have been attempted. At orientation both semesters this year all incoming students were exposed to a 3 to 4 hour small group experience designed to accentuate their humanness and experientially introduce them to the assumptions underlying the human potential encounter. Presently, students are leading their peers through the H.P. process. In some instances groups are composed of faculty and students. In Austin College, Sherman, Texas, some of the Basic Decisions Groups are based on the human potential assumptions.

A second intensive group experience evolved and is called Personal Identity groups. The group is remarkably similar to that described by Terry O'Banion in the January, 1969, issue of The Journal of College Student Personnel. The purpose is essentially the same as that of the seminars - an increase in self-concept. Through the use of reading in various areas of personal identity and reaction papers, and a very loosely structured group process which facilitates direct human encounter, persons are actively involved in seeking out their identity and establishing it.

Let us turn briefly to a few general comments about Human Potential as a philosophy of education. A goal of education is that of developing persons who are self-affirming, self-determining, self-motivating and empathetic. A purpose of a college education is to assist a person in discovering who he is, in developing a life style, in identifying and developing his potentials as a human being. Persons learn to like themselves by having experiences which feed their self-concept. Hence, we need to begin to help students and faculty identify and create opportunities for achievements

outside of, or along side of, the traditional academic areas. This is not a call to abandon teaching, but to broaden our understanding of that function. Education becomes concerned about the achievements of the whole person, not just about the learning of subject matter. The value of student personnel workers in any setting is not simply to deal with students who are having problems but to work directly toward humanizing the institution in which you find yourself and which has helped create the problems. Our job is to mirror to that institution what it is doing to all those persons who are a part of the particular educational community. Then it is our task to suggest direct ways in which persons will be developed who are self-affirming, self-determining, self-motivating and empathetic.

Presently at Kendall we are in the process of trying to move this philosophy throughout the institution as throughly as possible. In the near future we will be inviting each small unit - each academic department, the college senate, the administrative offices, committees, etc. - to look at itself in terms of what its strengths are, what its values are, and the realtionship between that unit and the values of the institution, and to begin setting behavioral goals which will encourage the use of human potential and growth for all who are a part of our community. Individual faculty members will be directly invited to consider the effect of their subject area and mode of teaching and grading on students and themselves, and to consider new forms of expression where possible.

Those of us at Kendall who began the Human Potential Seminars often remind ourselves of a basic truth: "to grow, you must let go". I urge you to let go of institutional stereotypes which may presently

prevent you from engaging your institution in an encounter for education which fosters humanness. For it is through honest and sensitive encounter that our potential is released as humans.